



AGENDA ITEM #: 16

DATE OF MEETING: July 20, 2006

ACTION: X

DISCUSSION:

PROJECT TITLE: First 5 California Diversity and Equity Project

A. SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

The First 5 Diversity and Equity Operational Plan is being presented to the State Commission for their review and approval. With substantial input from the County Commissions, the Steering Team of the First 5 California Statewide Diversity and Equity Project developed an *Operational Plan for the Principles on Equity to sustain and strengthen the cultural and linguistic diversity of First 5 policies and programs* that features:

- Two goals and five priority areas for furthering the integration of the Principles on Equity into the programs and services of First 5, and
- A recommendation to create a Diversity Steering Committee to oversee the implementation of this Operational Plan.

B. BACKGROUND/HISTORY:

In recognition of significant gaps and disparities in the provision of services for young children from diverse backgrounds and with diverse abilities and in their education and health outcomes, the State Commission adopted the Principles on Equity in 2001. To further ensure the implementation of the Principles on Equity, the State Commission awarded a contract in 2004 to California Tomorrow and its partners through a competitive bid process to lead the Statewide Diversity and Equity Project and produce a number of deliverables, including the Operational Plan and a recommendation about the future of the Advisory Committee on Diversity.

The Diversity and Equity Project staff began their work in 2005 by conducting an extensive assessment on state and local efforts on the implementation of the Principles on Equity. Throughout the course of the assessment, staff worked with a Steering Team composed of State and County Commission staff, First 5 California Association representatives, members of the Advisory Committee on Diversity and other experts. The Project Steering Team identified priority areas and developed a draft Equity Operational Plan that was circulated among County Commissioners and staff at a number of venues (e.g., Association meeting,



AGENDA ITEM #: 16

DATE OF MEETING: July 20, 2006

regional meetings, statewide conference) between March and May 2006. The Steering Team finalized the Operational Plan (Attachment 1) in June 2006, which also includes a recommendation to disband the Advisory Committee on Diversity.

C. PROPOSAL:

1. Contractor

The current contractor working on the Diversity and Equity Project is California Tomorrow and its partners, Interaction Institute for Social Change and Consulting by Design. Once the Operational Plan is approved, State Commission staff will continue working with California Tomorrow through the end of the year to prepare Action Plans for two or more of the priority areas. Future work will be conducted by a variety of current and new contractors, which will be detailed in the Action Plans.

2. Scope of work

Once the Operational Plan is approved, corresponding Action Plans will be developed for the priority areas via an inclusive process that involves participation from County Commissions and other key partners over the next few months. These Action Plans (3-5 years in length) will detail the proposed activities, timelines, resources, and outcomes. It is anticipated that the Action Plans will be presented to the State Commission in late 2006 with final approval at the January 2007 meeting. The Action Plans stem from the Operational Plan.

To oversee the implementation of the Operational and Action Plans, it is recommended that a Diversity Steering Committee be formed. The Steering Committee will be composed of County Commission representatives nominated by each of the First 5 Regions and other experts nominated by the State Commissioners. The Steering Committee would be responsible for developing appropriate mechanisms to identify successes in achieving the goals of the Plan. With the Steering Committee in place, the Advisory Committee on Diversity would be dissolved.



AGENDA ITEM #: 16

DATE OF MEETING: July 20, 2006

3. Primary goals and objectives

Based on feedback from County Commissions, the priority areas recommended by the Diversity and Equity Steering Team are organized as **two overarching goals** and **five priority areas**. Two of the priority areas – “early literacy and language”, and “sustaining the service infrastructure for young children and their families” -- are identified as key areas for collaborative action beginning in 2007. The remaining priority areas listed below are also critical to diversity and equity practices but are not ranked in any specific order for implementation.

GOAL 1

Reduce disparities in access to services and outcomes for children, with a focus on ethnicity, income, and special needs by ensuring that First 5 initiatives and programs respond effectively to the needs of children and their families who face greater challenges in their preparation to succeed in school.

GOAL 2

Support the infusion and integration of diversity and equity values into the culture and practice of First 5 Commissions, programs, initiatives and leadership.

4. PRIORITY AREAS

- A. Strengthen the early literacy and language skills of all young children to ensure a strong foundation for English acquisition and reading success.
- B. Strengthen the capacity and sustainability of the service infrastructure for young children and their families in resource-poor communities, neighborhoods, organizations and programs.
- C. Work to ensure that all 5 year-olds have a strong foundation to become successful dual language learners.
- D. Provide technical assistance to help County Commissions select and collect appropriate information and use disaggregated data reports effectively to inform decision making to address the challenges facing different subpopulations/groups.



AGENDA ITEM #: 16

DATE OF MEETING: July 20, 2006

- E. Conduct and disseminate policy research that highlights disparities that most impact children from diverse backgrounds and advocate for improvements in public systems and policy solutions to close gaps in services and funding.

5. Population

Commission staff and program staff of First 5 funded projects serving young children from diverse backgrounds and with diverse abilities throughout the State will be the direct recipients of the many training and technical assistance services and resources generated from the Operational Plan and the corresponding Action Plans for each priority area.

6. Timeframe

It is projected that the timeline for the implementation of various priority strategies, activities and deliverables that will be described in the corresponding Action Plans will range from 1 to 5 years. The Action Plans will be presented for the State Commission's review later this year and for their final approval in January 2007.

7. Evaluation

The evaluation of the Operational Plan should be linked to the Center for Results and become an integral part of the overall First 5 evaluation efforts in terms of both process and outcome data. In addition, it is recommended that the Operational Plan be periodically reviewed and monitored to assess its progress and make adjustments as needed by the Steering Committee. This review could be done by staff or via an independent consultant.

8. Cost

The cost associated with the Operational Plan will generally be embedded within the budgets of other major First 5 programs and initiatives. For instance, approximately \$250,000 per year is being designated for Regional Technical Assistance to support activities directly linked to the Principles on Equity, young English learners and



AGENDA ITEM #: 16

DATE OF MEETING: July 20, 2006

other First 5 California priority topics. The Power of Preschool program is another example where technical assistance funds have already been approved; a portion of these funds will be used to support and report on trainings and resources covering pertinent issues of diversity and equity needs (e.g., special needs, young English learners.) We anticipate a need for additional funds to support supplemental work. Any new funding requests will be presented in conjunction with the Action Plans for the priority areas; it is anticipated that these items will be considered at the January 2007 meeting of the State Commission.

D. FIRST 5 CALIFORNIA OBJECTIVES:

First 5 California policies and programs operate under a set of Guiding Principles that includes the Principles on Equity. The Operational Plan will enhance the use of the Principles on Equity in improving the services supported by First 5.

E. INTERFACE/IMPACT ON OTHER PROGRAMS:

The Principles on Equity cut across all of the First 5 programs, which include School Readiness, Power of Preschool, and Health Access for All Children, at both the state and local commission levels.

F. ATTACHMENT:

1. *Operational Plan for the Principles on Equity to sustain and strengthen the cultural and linguistic diversity of First 5 policies and programs*